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The University of Montana

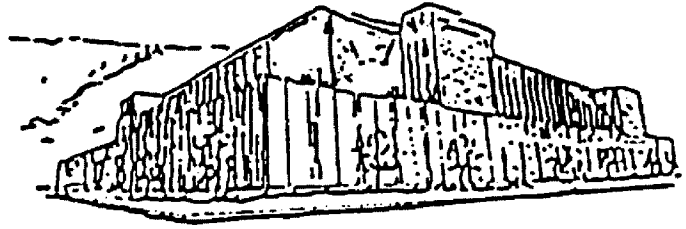
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**FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAMS AT THE MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL
IN THE STATE OF MONTANA**

by

Debra Jukich-Cuccia

B.A. The University of Montana 1994

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts in French

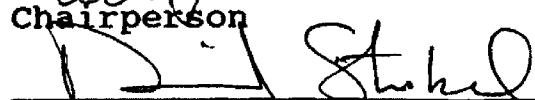
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Jukich-Cuccia, Debra Lee, M.A., December 1997

French

Foreign Language Programs at the Middle School Level in the State of Montana (56 pp.)

Director: O.W. Rolfe 

The purpose of this study is to determine what foreign language programs Montana middle schools are using in order to meet state requirements. For the purposes of this study, middle school is defined as schools that include 7 and 8th grade students. Inspiration for this study is the changes made in 1994 to the Montana State Accreditation Standards for public schools. The new standards raise such questions as: Which types of foreign language programs meet the state's requirements? What languages are being offered at the middle school level? How are smaller schools dealing with the need for a foreign language faculty member? Are current theories about language learning and second language acquisition being applied appropriately for the benefit of students?

The primary source of material for this study is the responses received from an independent questionnaire (see Appendix A) that was mailed to 327 schools in Montana. The schools were selected from the 1995-1996 Montana Public School Directory. All statistical data relied upon in this study is based upon the 159 questionnaire responses received. This study also relies upon secondary sources such as texts and articles in academic journals. This information is essential in determining the parameters the field of language learning and teaching.

The difference between language acquisition and learning is defined, relying upon Stephen Krashen's distinction. Age of language learner and cognitive development are addressed, as these are areas of vital interest in language learning. Various types of foreign language programs are discussed; (FLES) Foreign Language in the Elementary School, (FLEX) Foreign Language Exploratory, Partial Immersion, Full Immersion and Distance Learning. Language programs generally used in European Schools are briefly discussed, as our schools are often compared to their systems of education. The Montana State foreign language requirements for middle schools are analyzed and explained. Survey results provide the information to illustrate current trends in foreign language programs across the state. Follow-up student surveys and impressions are used to provide recommendations for the implementation of a unified and effective foreign language program at the middle school level in the State of Montana.

DEDICATION

For my mom and dad,
Kathleen Betty Ann and Richard Lee Jukich.

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INTRODUCTION

This study is about the various types of foreign-language programs and the selection of programs used at the middle school level in the state of Montana. It offers an inside look at what is happening across the state and how prepared we are to integrate foreign languages into the school curriculum. This information may be used by teachers in the field or by administrators interested in creating the best environment for language learning. Current knowledge obtained in the field of language learning and acquisition through years of research provides hope for a creative and productive classroom environment.

Recently, the Montana State Accreditation Standards for public schools were modified to include foreign languages at the middle-school level. These rules are stated on page 12 as follows in the Montana School Accreditation Standards and Procedures Manual :

(Rule 10.55.903 BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAM: JUNIOR HIGH AND GRADES 7 & 8 BUDGETED AT HIGH SCHOOL RATES. (i) Beginning 7/1/94). In addition, students will have the opportunity to take a second language, 1/2 unit each year in junior high and grades 7-8 (effective 7/1/94 /Subject to notice of deferral.)

A unit of credit is defined as a minimum of 225 minutes per week for one year, which is 45 minutes per day for one year.

To fulfill the foreign language component of 1/2 unit, one must take 45 minutes a day for one-half of the school year. The above rule states that a student shall 'have the opportunity to take a second language.' This is interpreted to mean that by state law, students are not required to participate in a foreign language class. They need only to be presented with the possibility of enrolling in such a course.

On the surface, it seems as if we have made a giant step in the direction of including foreign languages in the middle school curriculum. However, on further examination, one wonders whether or not these programs are even surviving since enrollment is optional to students in many schools. The types of language programs involved are not specified by state law.

Thus questions begin to arise: What foreign languages are being taught? How much time is spent per week in foreign language classrooms? Are current theories about language learning and language acquisition used to benefit foreign language learners? Are these programs designed to allow continuous progress and study of the target language at higher levels? How are schools dealing with the need for books and materials? What foreign language texts are being used in the middle schools? These are important issues with regard to curriculum.

.1. DEFINITION OF TERMS: MOTHER TONGUE, TARGET LANGUAGE, FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND SECOND LANGUAGE

Some specialized terms in this study are "mother tongue" vs. "target language." Mother tongue refers to the first language that is acquired by the individual. In the State of Montana this could be American English acquired by residents across the state, or it could also be Crow acquired by community members in Crow Agency, it might be Spanish acquired by people growing up in the Spanish speaking community of Billings. Target language denotes the language which is to be learned. If you were a Russian immigrant living in Montana, we would refer to English as the target language. If you are taking Spanish in school, it would be called the target language.

The term "foreign language" is often contrasted with the term "second language". A foreign language generally refers to a language that is taught in a classroom environment outside the community where it is spoken. Aside from school offerings, this includes a weekend crash course in French or an evening class in Latin. This language is not usually used in the community where it is taught. The definition of second language is a system of communication which possibly co-exists and is used alongside the mother tongue by members of the community. A good example of this might be the members

of a German speaking settlement in Montana that learn and use American English as a second form of communication. A second language could be taught at school or acquired through everyday usage.

In sum, the major difference between foreign language and second language is the function played by the language in a given society. Though second language is a foreign language which plays a functional role in a community, foreign languages play only minor roles. In order to display the major characteristics of either a second language or a foreign language, it is essential to know how it is learned and where it is spoken.

.2. COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT, LANGUAGE LEARNING AND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Cognitive development has defined stages starting at birth and reaching full development around the age of 12 that is referred to as 'neurological maturity' by Jean Piaget (Piatelli-Palmarini, 25.) This may vary by a year or two depending upon the individual. In regard to language learning this is an important stage of development because of the solidification of phonetic sounds. A child's sound system is created by the reinforcement provided by the environment. Sounds that are not heard are not used by the learner.

At a young age children learn to produce and recognize only the sounds heard in their linguistic environment. The trouble many Asians encounter with the /r/ and /l/ distinction in the English language is typical of this kind of problem. English speakers will encounter difficulties pronouncing the German /r/. English speakers will not immediately detect the distinctive feature of nasalization in the French language due to the fact that it is not a distinctive feature in English. When full cognitive development is reached, individuals have more difficulty in producing or hearing sounds that do not occur in their native tongue.

Rules of grammar and sentence structure are also fully formed unconsciously. Children are fully fluent in their native tongue making few grammatical errors, and using syntax that is associated uniquely with their mother tongue without being able to explain or consciously give the rules. This grammatical structure of the mother tongue will be transferred to the target language, causing interference. For example; the placement of adjectives in Spanish after the noun causes distress for English speakers. Students of Japanese whose mother tongue is English will confuse sentence structure by placing the verb after the subject rather than at the end of the utterance which is the rule for Japanese.

In language learning this is shown to be particularly relevant in the production of sound. An individual's sound system is 'concretized' leading him/her into difficulties with pronunciation in the target language. Larry Selinker says that fossilization effects can be avoided "if emphasis is placed on communicative abilities in context." (252) Reducing fossilization of the sound system and the grammatical system is the most important reason for starting language learning early. A young language learner is generally more flexible and has fewer difficulties than an older student. This realization supports the move to start the teaching of foreign languages at the middle school level or even earlier.

Language learning is the term applied to learning that usually happens in a classroom environment. This is the knowledge that is learned consciously by the student, 'the formal knowledge of the second language, our conscious learning.' (Krashen, 2) This includes memorized utterances such as greetings and leave takings. Other learned knowledge such as: verb conjugations, plural markings, place of adjective/adverbs.

Language Acquisition is spontaneously learned in the target language environment without the individual's conscious effort. According to Krashen, overt teaching of rules is not relevant to language acquisition. Speakers are not concerned

with the form of their utterances but with the message that is being conveyed. This may also occur in a classroom environment that has been manipulated in recreating a second language setting, where only the target language is utilized by teacher and student. A setting such as this is sometimes hard to maintain due to insufficient time and lack of 'real' experiences in the classroom.

Noam Chomsky proposed the idea of an innate Language Acquisition Device (LAD) which is believed to be responsible for first language acquisition in young children (Piatelli-Palmarini, 3.) Included in the LAD theory is the idea that around the age of twelve, this system shuts down and the individual loses this particular process forever. And if language learning takes place after this time period, it proceeds in a completely different manner. Krashen suggests that the LAD can be reactivated if the learner is placed in the right circumstances: target language use only, real communication, language in context and knowledge of routine patterns. Attitudinal and motivational factors contribute to this reactivation. Hence, the basis for the communicative approach in the classroom.

.3 Rationale for Language Learning

One might ask, Why teach a foreign language at the middle-school level? There are many reasons for such an effort. New information regarding language learning and acquisition show that there is a crucial time element involved in the process of which we were previously unaware. As regions of the brain mature, their level of pliability decreases. The brain is an open window to new information, but this capacity is diminished or even disappears with brain lateralization. This suggests that if you wait too long to begin instruction of a second language the ability may be lost. (Begley, 55)

A study performed on bi-linguals, examining cross-sections of the brain, shows that neurological pathways in mono-linguals are structured differently from bi-linguals. Among bi-linguals there are differences, depending upon the age when they learned their second language. Cross-sections from language learners who acquired their second language under the age of 12 have more connections. (Beagle, 35-36)

Goals 2000: Educate America Act provides objectives for all schools across the nation: (all students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography.)

This act reinforces languages as part of the core content-areas in school curriculum. It also states the fact that foreign languages promote 'the ability to reason, solve problems, apply knowledge, and write and communicate effectively ... '

What about the effect of learning foreign languages on other school subjects? According to Curtain and Pesola (5), there are immediate benefits that can be seen as a result of foreign-language study. It increases skills in reading, writing, English and mathematics. As one reads the local and national newspapers one is made well aware of the fact that American students score lower in Geography than other children throughout the world. This could be at least partially attributed to the lack of emphasis on foreign languages in the school curriculum. Knowledge of a second language and where it is spoken around the globe may be part of a solution. History and modern politics with their international plots and intrigues may be better understandable to the student who has background knowledge of the culture involved. Social sciences may take on a new depth as young people understand the role of language and cultural perceptions.

Will our children actually use the foreign languages they learn? And if so, when? Casual conversation with members in the community reveals that learning a foreign language does

not have a high priority, and is often considered a waste of time. This seems to show that many Montanans do not place a high emphasis on foreign languages. This is puzzling, since Montana has various ethnic groups whose mother tongue is not English. There are German-speaking communities all across the state, and Butte has many inhabitants that speak Finnish and Serbian. Many of the Native American tribes in Montana are establishing programs to save, teach and revitalize their mother tongues. Canada, a French-English bi-lingual nation is right next door. Billings has a large community of Spanish-speaking residents: Mexico is just at the border to the south of the United States, and we should not overlook the fact that the U.S. has the fourth largest Spanish-speaking population in the world.

Since many Montana youth relocate for employment reasons, it is essential for them to know that it is increasingly necessary for many residents of the south-western portion of the United States (California to Texas) to speak Spanish in order to find employment. Job opportunities exist for students who have learned Japanese because of the close economic ties and cultural exchanges with Japan. Translators are needed for companies that export goods to other countries. For example, in Missoula, Education Logistics translates and exports it's computer software programs to France and Canada. As Montana is a major destination spot for tourists, it is not

uncommon to encounter non English-speaking people. Montanans that can communicate in another language can help create a 'tourist friendly' environment. Increasingly, bi-lingual teachers are needed in our schools to teach English as a Second Language courses to new immigrants.

Will this create a disorderly and confused society where no one speaks English? Psychologically, one must not forget that around the age of 10, children are starting to be influenced by their peers and their own desire to become part of the group. They have already developed a loyalty to their friends, language and culture. Young adults often reject or mock anything that is different or new. Their enculturation is nearly completed, so we must expose them to new things before they quit seeking knowledge. At the middle-school level students are expected to explore. Exploration of another language is an ideal way to satisfy pupils' curiosity. This will not jeopardize English as a national language. In fact, study of a second language will only increase students' grammatical, structural and pragmatic knowledge of English.

As we have seen, there are more justifications for incorporating foreign languages into school curriculum than simply a legal issue. Mental development, age, employment opportunities and a noticeable improvement in other subject areas are strong reasons to start language learning early.

CHAPTER I

FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAMS IN THE STATE OF MONTANA

1.1. FLEX AND FLES PROGRAMS

Foreign Language Exploratory (FLEX) Programs are designed to explore various languages and cultures. (Curtain and Pesola, 25) The goal of a FLEX program is to introduce new peoples and cultures in order to generate, in students, an appreciation of the differences in our own multicultural society and in the world at large. The aim of such a program is to create a positive image of other cultures and to motivate young people to study a foreign language. A FLEX program is self-contained and short-term. This type of course might focus on learning only the target language or it may be a course on the nature of language and its diverse possibilities. A student might spend three or more weeks on one language and culture before exploring two or three others with equal time and attention. This is sometimes referred to as a 'potpourri' class (Curtain and Pesola, 26). A potpourri class is generally team-taught using a specialist in each of the languages that is being explored.

In a FLEX classroom, students are often taught in English but normally would be required to learn some simple phrases

and vocabulary in the target languages. Thus they are exposed to the target language and are not complete novices when they later enroll in a foreign language class. The learners focus on thematic items. They might learn about the school day, scheduling and required courses of the target community. Community values, such as the role of after school activities, plays, choir, sports, are addressed. Other thematic units of international interest such as environment, housing and population provide interesting material for discussion in a FLEX setting.

Chief Joseph Middle School in Bozeman has a FLEX program starting in the 6th grade as part of a continuous foreign language program focusing on the target languages rather than the overall nature of language.

All students are required to take four weeks of each of the following languages: French, German and Spanish. These short-term, self-contained units are good examples of an exploratory class. During their 7th and 8th grade years, they must enroll in one of these languages for a 12 week course which fits the following criteria of a FLES program.

Foreign Languages in the Elementary School known as (FLES), is the most common type used in schools across the United States. These are programs where the student typically

spends one class period per day, five days a week learning a foreign language (Curtain and Pesola, 25.) The goal of such a program is to introduce the student to the target language and culture with an emphasis on learning basic vocabulary in communication. The hope is for a functional proficiency in the target language. FLES programs are the beginning steps in a sequence of language learning. Because of the larger number of topics covered and the regular use of the target language, there is expectation of continued language study and success from the student.

Some FLES programs integrate other content-based subjects into the course curriculum such as music. Students might learn a couple songs in the foreign language and continue to learn about melody and rhythm and other aspects of music.

The idea behind using other subjects in the FLES classroom is to train the students to focus not on the grammar and sounds of a language but on the message that is being conveyed. In other words, the focus is on communication not verb conjugations or other linguistic structures.

FLES differs from FLEX mainly in its focus on subject content rather than language per se, but either of the above programs will work well at the middle school level.

Some advantages of a FLES program are: only one foreign language faculty member is needed; funding is limited to materials for one language; more time spent learning a second language; availability of continued sequential study of the target language is assured at higher levels. However, a FLEX program offers more variety and a larger understanding of the nature of language in general.

1.2. PARTIAL AND FULL IMMERSION PROGRAMS

Immersion programs became known in the U.S. through the establishment of immersion schools in Canada. English-speaking parents wanted their children to be able to speak French fluently. Many of them felt that traditional methods were inadequate for real language proficiency. An early 'immersion' class was offered to English-speaking children at St. Lambert's school in a Montreal suburb in 1968. (Kalantzis, Cope and Slade, 35) This was a new approach in which the language used at school was different from the language used at home. With the success of this program, immersion schools rapidly spread throughout Canada and into the United States.

In a partial immersion (often called bi-lingual) program, students are generally exposed to the target language approximately half the school day. Students start foreign

language study at a minimum of a half hour each day and gradually over a two-year period the amount of time is increased until half the school day is taught in the target language. (Curtain and Pesola, 23) This is accomplished by actually teaching some subjects in the target language. For example, a partial immersion school might teach art, history and math in German. The goal of this type of program is to create a working fluency in the target language.

A full immersion program places the students in a second language environment for the entire school day. (Curtain and Pesola, 23) Instruction in the target language is gradually introduced during the first two years of the program. Starting the third year it increases until the entire school day is taught in the target language. Students learn all subjects in the target language. The idea of a total immersion program is to create native-like fluency and speech in the students. Students are expected to be able to function fully as a native speaker in a foreign language environment.

The Cascade Colony School (K-8) of Sun River, Montana reports that its immersion program starts in kindergarten with the entire day (6 hours) spent in German. First and second graders are taught in German two hours every day, and the third through eighth grades are taught in German 1 and 3/4

hours every day. The language faculty member at Sun River also reports that immersion students are better than non-immersion program students at expressing themselves clearly in other subjects.

Partial immersion programs differ from full immersion programs in respect to the total amount of time spent during the school day speaking the target language. Positive aspects of these programs are: 1) the creation of more than a one-sided perception of the world often engendered by a monolingual society, 2) a broader vocabulary base and 3) overall understanding of how American English functions on the grammatical and pragmatic levels.

Some difficulties with implementing immersion programs in the middle school are: 1) the lack of qualified (native-like fluency) teachers of the various target languages, 2) equality of programs in the cities and rural areas and 3) continuous sequential availability of target languages at the secondary level.

1.3. DISTANCE LEARNING

Modern technology has introduced language programs called Distance Learning that are transmitted through satellite or broadcast by television into the classroom. In this type of

setting, a television monitor is the primary source of communication between the instructor and the students. Some programs are set up on an interactive level where another monitor or telephone line is used by the students to communicate with the teacher. Other distance programs are installed as a one-way communication pattern. Teachers in the classroom receiving the signal, called 'facilitators,' are generally not experts in the target language.

In a distance learning program a television screen allows the instructor to communicate with large groups of students in many different areas at once. Manuals and handout sheets are prepared by the target language instructor or developer of program and distributed to all participants. Sources for distance programs include but are not limited to; other schools, universities and television shows.

Saco Public School is an example of a small rural setting that is able to offer Spanish via an interactive television network since they don't have a foreign language faculty member. Saco reports that they have been unsuccessful in 'having a fully certified foreign language teacher on staff.' A teacher based in Scobey is the main source of this program which provides services to at least eight other schools in Montana. Some other distance learning participants use sources located out of state.

A distance program is attractive to schools in rural areas with few faculty members. It is also a good alternative when problems arise locating a qualified instructor. Problems associated with distance programs are little feedback in the classroom, lack of spontaneous two-way communication and teacher taught errors if teachers are unfamiliar with target language.

1.4 FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAMS ABROAD

A recent report prepared for the education ministers of the European Community (EC) shows that many member states have introduced curriculum reforms in order to start foreign language learning at the primary level. (Donato and Terry, 19)

Many European schools use a FLES program starting language study between the ages of 8 and 11. These students continue studying a language until graduation from secondary school. Usually around the age of thirteen, they are required to add another foreign language to their schedule. By the time an European student finishes high school, he/she has studied eight years of a second language and four years of a third language.

Students in France are required to start a foreign language class at 10 years old. This usually entails one and

a half hours of instruction per week. At age 14, they must choose another foreign language to study. They continue both courses until completion of their high school requirements. French students frequently describe themselves as poor language learners. This is due to the inadequate time allotted for the target language and lack of use in the classroom. Time spent in a foreign language class is limited to three hours per week for the first foreign language and only two hours for the second foreign language. Instructors tend to use only French in the classroom. Even more recently under the influence of the new cooperation between members of the European Community, the French government introduced a new program aimed at starting the first foreign language at the primary school level. (Marshall, A12)

In Luxembourg, students are instructed in French and German in an immersion setting. German is taught as a foreign language in first grade. In second grade, some subjects are taught in German for approximately eight hours a week. German study continues through the primary school level. French is introduced to students in the second grade for three hours per week. In third grade this increases to seven hours per week and continues through secondary levels. (Rosenbusch, 20)

Unfortunately, not all European Community member states take a strong initiative in language learning. England is not

quite as serious about language learning as many other European nations; young people consider knowing a foreign language as an unnecessary skill. (Snicker, B21) This country has the poorest record of foreign language programs in the European Community.

Australia starts FLES language programs at the primary school level. Languages that are most often involved are: aboriginal languages, Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Greek, Russian, Spanish, Thai and Vietnamese. All students whose mother tongue is English are required to take a language other than English. Problems exist in Australia's programs because there is often discrepancy between languages offered at primary levels and secondary levels. (Rosenbusch, 23) This dilemma is due to the large amount of ethnic groups and their demands for equality as target languages in the classroom. School districts scramble to accommodate language requests but battle against a lack of qualified teachers available at all levels and non-continuous programs.

As we have seen, many countries recognize the importance of starting early when it comes to successful language learning. The preferred type of program appears to be FLES. Partial Immersion programs are also popular when resources, public support and qualified faculty members are available.

CHAPTER II: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The data generated is based on questionnaires distributed to 327 schools that teach 7th and 8th grades students in Montana. (see Appendix A) Responses from 159 foreign language faculty members at 150 schools across Montana were received, a response rate of 46% (some middle schools employ more than one foreign language teacher.) My primary interests in this chapter are to find out: 1) How many foreign languages are taught by each teacher? 2) Which foreign languages do they teach? 3) What kind of foreign language program is used? 4) Are classes taught in the target language? 5) Have teachers had specialized training in linguistics? and 6) Does foreign language learning help students' cognitive skills in other content subject areas?

In analyzing the responses to these questions, I hope to display the basic characteristics of foreign language programs and the teaching methodologies currently used in the State of Montana. (see Appendix B) Consequently, the results will demonstrate whether or not Montana school programs need modifications.

2.1. ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES

As stated earlier, middle schools in Montana are required only to give students the 'opportunity' to take a foreign language. Some schools are very aggressive in including foreign languages as a mandatory course in the curriculum. Other schools allow students to enroll in a second language as an elective often competing with other subjects such as home economics or independent study.

The questions asked to the faculty member and tabulated responses are as follows:

1. How many foreign languages do you teach?

One language	= 74.8%
Two languages	= 4.4%
Three languages	= 1.2%
Four or more languages	= 1.2%
Unmarked/no foreign language	=18%

The majority of these teachers teach only one language, as they generally have specialized training and experience in only one language. The unmarked/no foreign language percentage includes the 26 schools that currently do not have a foreign language component in their course curriculum.

2. Which foreign language(s) do you teach?

French	=	18.2%
German	=	7.5%
Latin	=	1.2%
Spanish	=	52.2%
None	=	16.3%

The following languages are reported taught less than 1% of the time: Chinese, Cree, Greek, Japanese, Norwegian, Salish and Sign language. It is evident that Spanish plays a major role in school curriculums across the state.

3. What kind of foreign language class do you offer?

FLES	=	53.4%
FLEX	=	22.0%
Partial Immersion	=	2.5%
Full Immersion	=	0.6%
Unmarked	=	5.0%
No Foreign Language	=	16.3%

FLES programs appear to be the first choice of many schools. Reasons for this include: 1) only one faculty member is needed, 2) funding for course materials is limited and 3) more focus is put on a particular language.

4. Is this class taught in the target language?

90% of the time = 3.7%
 75% of the time = 9.4%
 50% of the time = 35.8%
 25% of the time = 18.8%
 less than 25% of the time = 15.7%
 No Foreign Language = 16.3%

Teachers that answered 50% or more realize that emphasizing use of the target language in the FLES classroom is an important issue. Frequently this is the only time a student is exposed to the spoken word.

5. What sort of materials do you use in the classroom?

Text and workbook = 49.8%
 Authentic books, music and videos = 44.0%
 Photocopies taken from various texts = 45.2%
 Other = 29.5%
 * Unmarked = 5.6%

*Does not include the 26 schools that have no FL component

Many teachers marked more than one response to this question revealing that they rely on a variety of sources for classroom materials. Surprisingly, many faculty members reported not having a text and workbook.

The top items mentioned in the category of 'other' included: self-made materials and handouts, computer software, internet sites, penpals, satellite television and games.

6. Have you had specialized training in one of the following?

Second Language Acquisition = 22.0%

Methods of Teaching a Foreign Language = 50.0%

Other = 11.3%

None = 20.1%

Only half of all foreign language teachers have had training in the teaching of a foreign language. Many of the respondents who marked training in methods of teaching a foreign language also have participated in courses in second language acquisition. Specialized training listed under 'other' were detailed as: communication studies, linguistics, foreign language study, immersion programs, workshops, conferences, and bi-lingual/ESL courses.

The following question was asked because many middle school faculty members teach not only a second language but also another subject. This was posed in order to determine whether they have seen a positive or negative influence in these other subjects due to foreign language study.

7. Do you believe the study of a foreign language helps students' cognitive skills in other content subject areas?

Yes = 71.7%

No = 2.5%

Depends = 2.5%

Unmarked = 5.6%

The majority of faculty members reveal that they see enhanced knowledge in other subject areas. Other classes that reveal this positive influence are: History, Social sciences, Math, Science, Geometry and English. Many teachers also report an improvement in life skills such as: sorting and organization, problem solving, presenting information, confidence, study habits, self discipline, multi-faceted way of looking at things and an awareness of a variety of foreign influences in our culture.

2.2. RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES

The above data analysis show that 74.8% of middle school teachers teach one language. The main reason is that foreign language study in Montana usually consists of the intense study and focus upon one language. All of the professionals that teach more than three languages are using a FLEX program that is generally broken into three week segments.

Traditionally, French, German and Spanish are taught the most in American schools. Spanish is the predominate second language taught in Montana. More than half of the teachers, 52.2%, report this as the primary foreign language at their school. This is probably an effect of the large number of Spanish speakers in the United States. Motivation for a particular language is higher when there is a possibility of encountering it in the community. French ranks second with 18.2% schools reporting this as their main target language followed by 7.5% school programs that teach German. The low percentile markings for Chinese, Cree, Greek, Japanese, Latin, Norwegian, Salish and Sign Language are possibly due to lack of qualified speakers, opportunity for use and community support.

FLES programs are the most popular in the middle schools of Montana. While 53.4% of the schools use a FLES program, 22.0% report FLEX and 2.5% say they direct a partial immersion program. These percentages do not accurately reflect the different types of programs. It seems that some teachers were confused by the differences and misreported the type of program they are involved in. Faculty members were asked to mark FLEX or Partial Immersion, many of them described their program. From their descriptions, I was able to discern that a discrepancy exists between what they do and what they report. For example, some faculty members believe that

speaking the target language for a 45 minute class period during half of a school year equals a partial immersion program.

The amount of time spent using the target language in the classroom is an important factor in successful language learning. Input that is received by students in the classroom is an invaluable source of information that is usually insufficient or unavailable in the community, and certainly in rural areas with a lower population of immigrants. Quite often the only chance Montana students have to be exposed to the target language is in the classroom. Only 35.8% of the foreign language faculty report using the target language half the time. Another 34.5% say that they use the target language less than half the time while in the classroom. These figures are not important if this involves a FLEX program which focuses on the nature of language and variations. Boredom, dissatisfaction and lack of progress are some devastating consequences to the language learner if the target language is not used in the FLES classroom.

Many teachers marked more than one response when it came to sources for classroom materials. What is not clearly reflected in the percentages is the fact that many of the teachers have no text or workbook and are teaching solely from self-made materials. Of the 124 teachers of French, German

and Spanish only 87 (76%) of them have texts and workbooks. This is a high number of professionals who are not receiving the funding and support needed in order to have the proper teaching materials for their students. (Appendix B, #10)

Specialized training in methods of teaching a foreign language is reported by 50.0% of the faculty members involved. Almost all of the survey participants who have training in second language acquisition also have experience in methods of teaching a foreign language. This leaves another 11.3% having some kind training which is not always appropriate or sufficient for the foreign language classroom. Surprisingly, 20.1% report having no special training at all. This means that one in five foreign language instructors at the middle school level lacks specialized training for accomplishing the task of teaching a second language.

Nearly three-quarters or 71.7% of all respondents say that the study of a foreign language helps students' cognitive skills in other content subject areas. This confirms Curtain and Pesola's declaration of perceptible benefits of language study. (5) Only 2.5% do not believe this is the case. Reasons given by the faculty members who said that there is no relation are: 1) that the foreign language class is not taken seriously by the students, 2) that the class is not taken seriously by parents and 3) that foreign languages should be

deleted from school curriculum.

According to the survey results, we must admit that new information including theory and techniques in the area of language learning is not used extensively nor productively throughout the state. There exists a lack of sufficiently trained faculty members and proper teaching materials. Many middle school language programs are not designed to encourage consistent continued language study.

2.3. ANALYSIS OF FLEX SURVEY BASED ON STUDENTS' RESPONSES

This survey, conducted by Jodi Sullivan for the Missoula County Public School (MCPS) Foreign Language Curriculum Committee, was addressed to 236 high school students who participated in FLEX programs. (see Appendix C) This survey was carried out in the following high schools: Big Sky, Hellgate and Sentinel; I will examine the following questions and answers used in the survey in order to see the overall student impressions about FLEX programs.

Students were asked the following:

1. Did you find FLEX helpful?

Yes = 52.1%

No = 46.6%

More than half of the students surveyed found a FLEX program helpful. This is an ambiguous question as we know not what this course helped them in.

2. Was foreign language study easier after completion of FLEX?

Yes = 43.6%

No = 55.9%

Many students did not find foreign language study easier after participating in a FLEX course. Generally, these classes are not meant to create a deep understanding of the target languages.

3. Did FLEX influence you to study a particular language?

Yes = 36.1%

No = 62.7%

FLEX programs often introduce to students two or three different languages. The idea behind this is to expose the learner to the target language and culture, create a positive image and aid in his/her future choice of a language.

The survey participants stated as follows the worst aspects of the FLEX course: 1) learning little about the languages themselves, 2) not enough time spent on each language, 3) course not in depth, 4) course not taken seriously by students and 5) confusion.

The students reported that learning about other countries, foreign cultures and language study were the best aspects of the FLEX class.

2.4. RESULTS OF STUDENTS IMPRESSIONS AND REMARKS

As seen in the result section of the questionnaires, approximately 22.0% of foreign language programs in Montana are FLEX. More specific information regarding FLEX deserves further attention in another study concerning the type of FLEX programs which are currently used in Montana. Even though the students surveyed attended three different schools, we know that the programs they participated in had common goals because there are only two teachers who work together implementing FLEX programs in Missoula.

The majority of participants in the MCPS survey found FLEX helpful. It is unclear as to what ways the students found these courses helpful. The foreign language faculty questionnaires indicate perceived improvement in students that study another language in other subject areas. Accordingly, we may interpret the pupils response to mean that FLEX was helpful in other subjects.

More than half the learners (55.9%) stated that foreign language study was not easier after completion of FLEX. These

students have answered negatively because of their probable misunderstanding of the purpose of the course. Students confused the amount of time and effort needed for successful language learning in a secondary level class with their earlier experience in an exploratory class. This first experience leaves a conception that foreign language learning is easy since students learn just a little vocabulary and a few phrases.

Only 36.1% of the students say that FLEX influenced them to study a particular language. Not knowing the nature of the FLEX programs involved, it is impossible to say whether these programs were a success or not. Please remember that in an exploratory setting there is a broad range of study from the general nature of language or more focused introduction on one language and culture. Also, there is concern as to the availability of target language at a higher level. Students might have explored languages such as German, Latin and Japanese only to find these languages not offered at Junior High or High School levels.

Student comments on the worst and best aspects combined with what we know about FLEX, suggest that the overall nature of the programs in which they were enrolled focused on introducing other countries and cultures using English as the means of communication rather than on language. Students would

have perhaps been, required to learn only a few chosen words and phrases in the target language. For students who really wanted to speak a foreign language this would lead to dissatisfaction.

Another possibility is that classroom materials are not appropriate for the learners' age. Texts that are intended for younger children seem silly and are not taken seriously by the language learner. Texts that are designed for older students contain topics that don't interest them. Students then feel that they did not 'learn' the target language.

Isolated changes and unsystematic programs "create frustration, disappointment, lack of motivation and interest." (Donato and Terry, XI) Certainly, the students' frustration and lack of seriousness is understandable if they are taking a language course without a text and workbook, and no coherent, consistent plan of study. This gives an impression that the class is not serious.

Marcia Rosenbusch states that problems seen in middle school programs are not the same as at higher levels. Factors she lists as unique are: "lack of qualified teachers, inadequate program design, inappropriate or unrealistic goals, lack of coordination and articulation, inappropriate methodologies, inadequate and insufficient materials and

lack of evaluation process." (31) That some of these issues are present in Montana schools is made clear by looking at the responses of both students and faculty.

CHAPTER 3: SUGGESTIONS

In this chapter, I will suggest improvements for the foreign language programs in the state of Montana. I will underline the main social hindrances or support factors that must be taken into consideration by all Montana residents seeking a sound education for their children.

3.1 COMMUNITY MOTIVATION AND ATTITUDES

When examining target languages to be learned in any state or country the populace must decide which languages to learn and why. These languages are often chosen based upon stereotypes of the people, background knowledge of the language, familiarity with the culture, and possibility of use. Perceptions by the citizenry of the classroom, the teacher and the target community affect successful learning. These attitudes are generated on an individual and group basis. An individual will develop his/her own ideas about a language and culture under the influence of the larger community.

Selinker emphasizes motivation and attitude as factors that affect an individual's attitude toward the target language. (253) Krashen divides such factors into two categories:

'integrative motivation' defined as a desire to be liked by members of the target community and 'instrumental motivation' the desire to achieve proficiency for practical reasons. (22) These reasons might be for travel, job or frequent contact with speakers of other languages. Integrative motivation exists when an individual plans on moving or moves to another community. This person's goal is to become a member of a different society. Since most Montana residents are not currently migrating to another country, integrative motivation plays a minor role affecting attitude.

This leaves instrumental motivation as the major cause of language study for most individuals in Montana. Many young people migrate to other states for employment. In several of these other regions, the knowledge of another language can be a job requirement. Insufficient language study places young men and women seeking work at a disadvantage financially and culturally. Contact with native speakers from Mexico and Quebec is quite common in some areas of the States. More and more immigrants from other countries, such as China, Russia and Vietnam, live in our state. This motivates students to study other more exotic languages in order to communicate with these new members of our cities and towns.

Community attitudes are much more difficult to pinpoint, and their influence upon individuals is onerous to identify. Unconsciously, as a group, people have stereotypes towards other languages and cultures. Any existing negative images may appear in family conversations, jokes, articles in newspapers and even in television sitcoms. The choice of a particular language is affected by what students have heard about those people and their culture. Overall community attitude toward language learning can be analyzed from the support given to school programs and languages offered.

Currently foreign language study in Montana is often considered to be an 'extra' rather than a basic skill. This is evident from state law which mandates only the opportunity for foreign language study. This means that the most educated members of our state who create and modify laws; do not lend full support to language programs. On a local level, school districts do not always provide the necessary funding for resources. Students are often allowed to enroll in foreign languages as an elective. As reported by teachers and students, parents do not take foreign language classes seriously. These facts point to low community motivation.

3.2 EFFECTIVE UNIFIED PROGRAM

Upon reviewing the survey information, it is evident that some changes are advised for foreign language programs in Montana. What we know about language and language learning necessitates the commencement of target language study at a younger age. The first challenge is to erase the current interpretation of an opportunity for language study and incorporate it into all school curricula. If lawmakers, school officials and community members assent to required language learning, study might be taken more seriously. At the university level, some Montana students have a foreign language requirement they must meet for graduation.

Montana students need to know more about other cultures in order to be competitive on a national and international level. As we have already seen, younger individuals are more suited to successful language learning. A sequential long-term program starting in the elementary school and continuing through college is necessary for successful language learning. These sequential programs should include a written goal involving lower and higher levels of learning. Often students are subjected to sporadic and inconsistent courses. They sometimes start a language only to find that it is not offered at the junior or high school level. Foreign language study must consist of more than just a few isolated courses.

A detailed, long-term, continuous plan must be developed for a successful program. Target languages must be available at all steps in the learning process.

A variety of resources must be available to the language learner. Text/workbook, authentic source materials of all kinds should be provided. School districts must allot adequate funding so foreign language faculty may purchase supplies needed for the classroom. Items such as audio and video equipment, cassettes and computer programs are basic needs in a language class. Acces to penpals or internet sites of the target language are great motivators for young people.

The amount of time needed to learn the target language must be considered. A couple of hours each week does not provide enough exposure to learn a language. As a result of insufficient class time, students realize that they are not learning or the class is a waste of time. Reactions such as this are actually due to lack of time spent. The size of class is an important issue. Generally, there should be no more than 20 students per class. Individual attention is needed to give students an opportunity to use the target language on a one-to-one basis.

The choice of qualified staff members to teach the target language is an important issue. Faculty must not only know the language but know how to teach the language. Most language teachers are the only expert in their field at a particular school. They work alone and are usually responsible for choosing texts and all other materials for the classroom. Therefore it is imperative they have appropriate credentials. Aside from fluency in the target language, knowledge of teaching techniques, learning styles and cognitive development are included in the background of a qualified teacher.

A supportive atmosphere is included in the recipe for success. On a community level, parents, friends, and others must take these classes seriously. All faculty members at middle school level must support the effort to introduce foreign languages into the curriculum.

The final ingredient, and perhaps the single most important is adequate funding. School administrators are responsible for directing finances for foreign languages. We can't have good programs when there are insufficient materials with which to teach.

CONCLUSION

It is not my purpose to dictate a particular foreign-language program for the schools in Montana, but to provide information and an overview of research results which may aide professionals in the field to incorporate foreign languages into the core curriculum of middle schools. The most important issue for Montana schools is the choice of program. Distance Learning, Immersion, Partial immersion, FLEX and FLES are all possible formats for the middle-school level.

Research findings during the past two decades about language learning/acquisition, the role of age and cognitive development provide the strongest of reasons for starting these courses as soon as possible. Younger individuals are simply better adapted to language learning. Myriam Met aptly describes the positive influence of language study on other subjects. "Student learning is improved when students are able to understand the underlying relationships that connect what they are taught from class period each day, and from day to day. No subject exists in isolation from other disciplines." (81)

The Goals 2000: National Education Act names foreign languages as part of the core content-area needed to ensure a complete education. Often foreign language instructors find

themselves isolated or teamed up with teachers of elective courses with which they have little in common. The knowledge learned in a language class has been shown to have a direct positive effect on skills needed in reading, writing, English and mathematics.

Overall, Montana students are very successful in school subjects on a national level. "Montanans' SAT scores well above average" was the front page story of the Missoulian (Associated Press and the Missoulian, front page and A10.) Language teachers of Montana have confirmed that they have seen a direct connection between foreign-language study and other content-area subjects. If the study of foreign languages is not currently recognized on it's own merits, it should at least be seen in relation to it's positive influence on other school subjects.

According to the 1994 Draper report, Montana was one of only four states to legislate the offering of foreign-language study at the middle-school level. (Rosenbusch, 4) Montana is ahead of some other areas of the country, in that we have a law mandating opportunity for language learning. Unfortunately, results of the two surveys show that both teachers and students do not take language study seriously enough, due to a combination of factors: a misunderstanding of goals, dubious community support, shortage of teaching

materials in the classroom, lack of sufficient time allotted to programs, disorganized and non-continuous language programs and unqualified language teachers. These problems could be solved by creating successful foreign-language programs with the full support from school districts and community members.

In review, the following items should be considered when designing a successful foreign-language program.

- required language study
- sequential, longterm study
- written unified goals
- sufficient time per week
- supportive atmosphere
- adequate funding
- qualified instructors

Community goals and values along with school issues determine which programs are selected and how successful they will be. The information gleaned from the surveys could be used to benefit Montana students. Communication on an international level is the topic for the 21st century. Trade pacts, such as NAFTA, between the United States and other countries require individuals who are fluent in more than one language. Montana students can only benefit from successful foreign-language programs in the middle school.

APPENDIX A

Survey on Middle School Foreign Language Programs

Please read the following questions and check the box or boxes which best describe the circumstances:

Your Name: _____ E-mail: _____
School where employed: _____ Town/Zip: _____
Your Degree(s): _____
Certification, subjects and grade level: _____

1. How many foreign languages do you teach?
 1 3
 2 4 or more

2. Which foreign languages do you teach?
 French German Japanese
 Spanish Russian Other _____

3. What kind of foreign language class is it?
 FLES program - students are taught the target language 1 to 5 times per week, time is usually 20 minutes up to one hour.
 FLEX program - students are taught the target language for a limited, short-term program. Usually three weeks to two months.
 Partial Immersion - students are taught in the target language for up to 1/2 of the day.
 Immersion Program - 3/4 to whole school day students are taught in the target language.

4. What is the goal of this language program?
 Exposing students to foreign language study in an effort to motivate them to study further.
 Exposing students to a foreign language and culture in order to create cultural awareness.
 Learning basic communication skills along with reading and writing in the target language.
 Focusing on language proficiency geared towards fluency in all four language areas.
 Other _____

5. Is this class taught in the target language?
 90% of the time 75% of the time
 50% of the time 25% of the time
 less than 25% of the time

6. Is there any cooperative (team) teaching done? Please explain briefly.

yes no

7. What sort of materials do you use in the classroom?

text and workbook (name) _____

authentic books, music and videos

photocopies taken from various texts

other _____

8. What is your level of satisfaction with this program?

high good fair poor

9. Does this program meet the goals it is intended to meet?

yes no Comment; _____

10. Do you receive funding for materials in this program that is equivalent to that of other content area subjects?

yes no unknown

11. Have you had specialized training in one of the following?

Courses in Second Language Acquisition.

Courses in Methods of Teaching a Foreign Language

Other _____

12. Are you requested to teach languages you have not formally studied at University level or acquired in a foreign setting?

yes no

13. Do you agree with Montana State regulations mandating the teaching of foreign languages at the Middle School level?

strongly agree disagree

agree strongly disagree

14. Do you believe the study of a foreign language helps students cognitive skills in other content subject areas?

yes no Comment; _____

15. Would you make any changes to the foreign language program at your school if possible?

yes no Comment; _____

16. Please list the language classes you are teaching (Russian, 1st year) number of students and grade level of students for each quarter in the 1996-1997 school year.

first quarter	second quarter	third quarter	fourth quarter
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

APPENDIX B

Survey on Middle School Foreign Language Programs : RESPONSES

1. How many foreign languages do you teach?

- 1 = 95.6%
- 2 = less than 1%
- 3 = less than 1%
- 4 or more = less than 1%

2. Which foreign languages do you teach?

- French = 19.7% German = 8.1% Japanese = less than 1%
- Spanish = 56.4% Russian = less than 1%
- Other = less than 1% None = 17.6%

Special note: The **Other** category consists of the following languages which are all taught less than 1% of the time. Generally there is just one school teaching each of these languages; Chinese, Cree, Greek, Japanese, Norwegian, Salish and Sign language. It is evident that Spanish plays a major role in school curriculums across the state.

3. What kind of foreign language class is it?

- FLES program = 57.8%
- FLEX program = 23.8%
- Partial Immersion = 2.7%
- Immersion Program = 0.6%
- No response = 20.3%

4. What is the goal of this language program?

- ** As this question varies according to community goals, it was not included in percentages.

5. Is this class taught in the target language?

- 90% of the time = 3.7%
- 75% of the time = 9.4%
- 50% of the time = 35.8%
- 25% of the time = 18.8%
- Less than 25% of the time = 15.7%
- No foreign language program = 16.3%

6. Is there any cooperative (team) teaching done? Please explain briefly.

- Yes = 8.8%
- No = 66.0%
- No response = 25.0%

Special note: Five schools report that the foreign language teacher acts as a facilitator for a satellite program. Another five schools say they participate in SEMTEC which is an interactive Spanish television program taught by a teacher in Scobey.

7. What sort of materials do you use in the classroom?

Text and workbook = 49.0%
 Authentic books, music and videos = 44.0%
 Photocopies taken from various texts = 45.2%
 Other = 29.5%
 No response = 22.0%

Special note: Many teachers report that they must organize and create their own material which can be very difficult and time-consuming. As you can see by the percentages, most teachers use a wide variety of sources for classroom materials. There is a new text out that looks promising for FLEX programs that explores French, German, Italian, Japanese, Latin and Spanish called Invitation to Languages published by Glencoe/McGraw-Hill. The following is a list of the top 5 texts that are currently used by various schools.

FRENCH

Bienvenue
Dis-Moi
Et Vous
Exploring French
French

GERMAN

Deutsch Aktuell I
Exploring German
German for Beginners
German Today
Satellite manual

SPANISH

Bravo
Dime!
Exploring Spanish
Voces y Vistas
Spanish for
Mastery I

8. What is your level of satisfaction with this program?

High = 15.7% Good = 35.2%
 Fair = 23.2% Poor = 2.5%
 No response = 23.2%

9. Does this program meet the goals it is intended to meet?

Yes = 61.0%
 No = 5.0%
 No response = 33.9%

10. Do you receive funding for materials in this program that is equivalent to that of other content area subjects?

Yes = 33.3%
 No = 22.0%
 Unknown = 21.3%
 No response = 23.2%

11. Have you had specialized training in one of the following?
Courses in Second Language Acquisition = 22.0%
Courses in Methods of Teaching a Foreign Language = 50.0%
Other = 11.3%
No response = 36.4%

Special note: These responses do not show that nearly one half of the foreign language teachers reported not have any training in teaching foreign languages.

12. Are you requested to teach languages you have not formally studied at University level or acquired in a foreign setting?
Yes = 5.6%
No = 70.4%
No response = 23.8%

13. Do you agree with Montana State regulations mandating the teaching of foreign languages at the Middle School level?
Strongly agree = 46.5%
Agree = 25.1%
Disagree = 6.9%
Strongly disagree = 0.6%
No response = 20.7%

14. Do you believe the study of a foreign language helps students cognitive skills in other content subject areas?
Yes = 71.6%
No = 2.5%
No response = 22.0%

Special note: Many foreign language teachers teach more than one subject. They report positive influences in the following content subjects: English grammar and vocabulary, Geometry, History, Math, Science and Social Studies. Other areas that are improved: confidence, organization, problem solving, presenting information, reading skills, self-discipline and study habits.

15. Would you make any changes to the foreign language program at your school if possible?
Yes = 62.2%
No = 13.2%
No response = 24.5%

Special note: Most faculty members reported the freedom to choose their own texts (providing they received adequate funding.) Changes frequently reported that they would like are:

- Continuous, sequential two year programs.
- Start foreign languages earlier than middle school.
- Make foreign languages mandatory for all students.
- Have foreign language classes meet daily.
- More time with students.
- Add another foreign language as a possible choice.
- More funding for teaching materials.
- Add travel opportunities.
- Set unified goals including high school programs.
- Three teachers would like foreign languages as an elective.
- One teacher would like foreign languages discontinued.

16. Please list the language classes you are teaching (Russian, 1st year) number of students and grade level of students for each quarter in the 1996-1997 school year.

** This question was not included in survey results.

+ The **NO RESPONSE** category includes the 26 schools or 16.3% that do not have a foreign language program.

APPENDIX C

MCPS Foreign language Curriculum Committee 1996-97
FLEX Survey

Number surveyed: 236

Number enrolled: 1666

Percentage surveyed: 14.2%

BIG SKY

surveyed: 69/518 = 13.3%

HELLGATE

surveyed: 90/601 = 15.0%

SENTINEL

surveyed: 77/502 = 15.3%

Participants were enrolled in the FLEX program in:

6th grade: 115/236 = 48.7%

7th grade: 128/236 = 54.2%

8th grade: 131/236 = 55.5%

Participants studied:

French: 156/236 = 66.1%

German: 166/236 = 70.3%

Japanese: 51/236 = 21.6%

Russian: 18/236 = 7.6%

Spanish: 165/236 = 69.9%

Did the participants find FLEX helpful?

YES: 103/236 = 52.1%

NO: 110/236 = 46.6%

Was foreign language study easier after completion of FLEX?

YES: 103/236 = 43.6%

NO: 132/236 = 55.9%

Did FLEX influence the participants to study a particular language?

YES: 85/236 = 36.1%

NO: 148/236 = 62.7%

Student comments

BEST ASPECT: learning about foreign countries and cultures, language study

WORST ASPECT: learning little about the languages themselves, not enough time spent on each language, confusion, course not in depth, course not taken seriously by students

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- focus on one language for the duration of the course
- longer periods of study (one semester, one year)
- use books
- focus on the mechanics of the language
- allow students to choose the language of study

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